Win hearts and minds

Engage your audience by appealing to their senses, intellect and emotions.

Yesterday’s article looked at the first four strategies of becoming a more confident and charismatic speaker. Today’s article discusses the next four strategies, which will help you take your presentation from basic to brilliant.

Develop your confidence as a speaker by practising in front of an audience as often as you can.

Speak in a conversational tone
Public speaking in the 21st century is no longer a monologue. It is a dialogue between your audience and yourself. To ensure that happens, write your speech for the ear and not for the eye. In other words, type your speech as you talk.

When you rehearse, practise aloud – whether to your colleague, or as you are driving home. Present as though you are speaking to just one person.

Train yourself to look your audience in the eyes, one pair at a time. This will help you to modulate your tone and pace. More importantly, it will also help you strengthen your rapport with the audience.

Stop being speaker-centric; be audience-centric.
Nervousness stems from being speaker-centric. You think to yourself: Will they like me? What if I forget my script? Can they understand what I am saying? Will they laugh at me?

Instead, be audience-centric. This will take the pressure off you. Questions to ask include: What will the audience get out of my speech? What are three points the audience can take away today? Is this setting appropriate for my audience?

By focusing on your audience’s needs, it allows you to be in control. Control gives you certainty. Certainty kills off nervousness.

Getting to know your audience beforehand also helps reduce any uncertainties you have. This includes researching about your audience before your presentation.

What are the demographics of your audience, what are their needs and wants, what are the pains they are suffering from, what will they consider to be of value, what can they relate to best?

Not only will this help you be more prepared, the audience will also appreciate you more.

It's all about stage time
If you want to become a more confident speaker, the shortest amount of time, speak in front of a live audience as often as you can.

In other words, chalk your stage time because it is part of your growth as a speaker comes from speaking in public.

And ensure that you make every speaking opportunity count by evaluating yourself after every presentation.

One way to do that is to record yourself and watch the recording.

Another way to do a self-evaluation is asking yourself two questions: “What do they like best about my presentation?” and “What’s one area I can improve on?” Continue to strengthen your strengths and use your next speaking opportunity to overcome your weaknesses.

It is never about how good you are right now. It is about stage time. If you speak in front of the audience today, you will get better tomorrow. You will get better tomorrow as a result of this experience!

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